



March 9th, 2022

Re: Black and Brown United in Action Testimony in support of S.B. 284

Dear Co-Chair Abercrombie, Co-Chair Moore and the members of the Human Services Committee,

We are Black and Brown United In Action, a grassroots organization located in New Haven, Connecticut and are testifying in support of S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS. Expanding access to HUSKY up to age 18 regardless of immigration status is an important step in making sure our immigrant community has access to the healthcare we all need and deserve. But our work doesn't end with expanding access up to age 18; we need to open access to HUSKY and healthcare to all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

Immigrants comprise almost 30 percent of the uninsured in the U.S. According to data retrieved by the American Immigration Council, as of 2019, there were nearly 45 billion immigrants in the United States, of which over 20 million were men and women, and almost 3 million children, accounting for about one-fifth of the world's migrants. To be more exacting, one in seven Connecticut residents is an immigrant, one in six residents are American citizens with at least one immigrant parent or caregiver. As stated by Senator Lesser last year regarding HB 6687, "many immigrant survivors are unable to access healthcare because their undocumented status makes them ineligible. This is true for thousands of undocumented immigrant families in Connecticut who are blocked from obtaining healthcare coverage under these state-funded programs. Providing medical assistance to undocumented immigrants means not only safeguarding their individual wellbeing, but potentially that of the community as a whole", which is still true and supplements why we must expand HUSKY access to immigrants of all ages.

Increased immigration enforcement around the country has led to understandable fear among undocumented immigrants, fear that has extended to accessing basic resources like education, economic assistance, and—perhaps most crucially at the moment—healthcare. Amongst other things COVID-19 drew attention to the inequities within the healthcare system as many undocumented immigrants were unable to receive the healthcare needed to survive the pandemic. The issue of hard working people, poor people who provide basic essential needs to so many, being deprived of healthcare resources is as old as slavery. The fact is, these are people who kept the economy going during the pandemic because they were the ones who had to work to provide for themselves and fund their healthcare needs.

From domestic workers to bus drivers to restaurant workers to home health aides, many immigrants provided key essential services to maintain the normalcy during the crisis, at the cost of their own health. But we can change the narrative, we must change the narrative by taking steps and changing laws and practices to be - equitable. This must happen given that CT already declared Racism as a public health crisis, the next step is to remove the walls which maintain the oppression by way of changing law, practices and narrative. Black and Brown United in Action supports S.B. 284 and look forward to you supporting this bill and expanding HUSKY access to immigrants of all ages.

Sincerely,

Black and Brown United in Action